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Agenda item 114

PROGRAMME PLANNING

Letter dated 17 October 1996 from the President of the General Assembly to the Chairman of the Fifth Committee

I have the honour to transmit a letter dated 16 October 1996, addressed to me, for your attention, by the Chairman of the Special Political and Decolonization Committee, regarding agenda item 114, entitled "Programme planning".

(Signed) RAZALI Ismail

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ANNEX

Letter dated 16 October 1996 from the Chairman of the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee) addressed to the President of the General Assembly

In response to your letter dated 27 September 1996 addressed to me, I have the honour to enclose for transmittal to the Chairman of the Fifth Committee, the following communications:

(a) Note verbale dated 14 October 1996 from the Permanent Mission of Argentina to the United Nations;

(b) Letter dated 14 October 1996 from His Excellency Mr. Celso Luiz Nunes Amorim, Permanent Representative of Brazil to the United Nations;

(c) Letter dated 14 October 1996 from Mr. Paul Thomas Arkwright, Permanent Mission of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the United Nations;

(d) Letter dated 14 October 1996 from Mr. Cameron R. Hume, United States Mission to the United Nations;

(e) Letter dated 15 October 1996 from His Excellency Mr. Utula Utuoc Samana, CMG, the Permanent Representative of Papua New Guinea to the United Nations, on behalf of the members of the Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples.

I wish to draw your attention, in particular, to the proposal made by the Permanent Representative of Papua New Guinea, on behalf of the Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples, for the inclusion of a new additional subprogramme in programme 1 of the medium-term plan for the period 1998-2001.

(Signed) Alounkèo KITTIKHOUN
Chairman
Special Political and Decolonization
Committee (Fourth Committee)

Appendix

[Original: Spanish]

A. NOTE VERBALE DATED 14 OCTOBER 1996 FROM THE PERMANENT MISSION OF ARGENTINA ADDRESSED TO THE CHAIRMAN OF THE FOURTH COMMITTEE

1. The Permanent Mission of the Argentine Republic to the United Nations presents its compliments to the Office of the Chairman of the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee) and has the honour to refer to the consultations being conducted by the Chairman of the Fifth Committee concerning agenda item 114, as reflected in document A/C.4/51/2.

2. Given the importance that the States Members of the United Nations attach to the tasks of decolonization, it is felt to be crucial, in order to avoid possible mistaken judgements about the importance and significance of the eradication of colonialism, to maintain in future budgets of the Organization a subprogramme devoted to the Special Committee on Decolonization, as has been done up until the present time.

[Original: English]

B. LETTER DATED 14 OCTOBER 1996 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF BRAZIL ADDRESSED TO THE CHAIRMAN OF THE FOURTH COMMITTEE

1. I have the honour to refer to document A/C.4/51/2, in which the Chairman of the Fifth Committee asks you to arrange that the views of the Fourth Committee on programmes 2, Peacekeeping operations, 3, Outer space affairs, and 23, Public information, of the proposed medium-term plan for the period 1998-2001 be communicated to him as soon as possible.

2. In addition to the programmes mentioned by the Chairman of the Fifth Committee, the Brazilian delegation believes that programme 1, Political affairs, should also be considered by the Fourth Committee. In particular, the Committee should present its views on whether decolonization should remain as a paragraph of subprogramme 1.6, General Assembly affairs, or if it should be a separate subprogramme under programme 1.

3. My delegation stands ready to present its views on the other issues mentioned by the Chairman of the Fifth Committee, when you open them for discussion. You may wish to call an informal meeting for an exchange of views on this matter.

(Signed) Celso L. N. AMORIM
Ambassador
Permanent Representative of Brazil
to the United Nations

[Original: English]

C. LETTER DATED 14 OCTOBER 1996 FROM THE REPRESENTATIVE OF THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND TO THE FOURTH COMMITTEE ADDRESSED TO THE CHAIRMAN OF THE FOURTH COMMITTEE

1. I have the honour to refer to the letter dated 27 September from the Chairman of the Fifth Committee to you as Chairman of the Special Political and Decolonization (Fourth) Committee about agenda item 114, Programme planning.

2. The United Kingdom believes that for the sake of good order and in accordance with the General Assembly decision of 20 September, consideration of agenda item 114, Programme planning, should take place in the Fifth Committee. Accordingly, the United Kingdom delegation to the Fourth Committee intend to act in concert with their Fifth Committee colleagues with a view to formulating an agreed position on the various draft programmes in the Fifth Committee.

3. With respect to the comments made by the representative of Cuba in the general debate on decolonization on 9 October, the United Kingdom does not agree that there should have been an explicit reference to decolonization in the Fifth Committee Chairman's letter. The letter correctly lists all draft programmes of relevance to the Fourth Committee. The issues mentioned by the delegate of Cuba are covered by programme 1, Political affairs, and do not require a separate reference. I should add for the record that the United Kingdom is content with the sections of programme 1 on decolonization as drafted and will be taking this position in the Fifth Committee.

(Signed) P. T. ARKWRIGHT
United Kingdom delegate to
the Fourth Committee

[Original: English]

D. LETTER DATED 14 OCTOBER 1996 FROM THE REPRESENTATIVE OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO THE FOURTH COMMITTEE TO THE CHAIRMAN OF THE FOURTH COMMITTEE

1. Pursuant to the letter of 27 September 1996 from the Chairman of the Fifth Committee to you, in your capacity as the Chairman of the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (A/C.4/51/2), I attach herewith comments from the United States delegation on the following items of the proposed medium-term plan for the period 1998-2001:

(a) Programme 2, Peacekeeping operations;

(b) Programme 3, Peaceful uses of outer space;

(c) Programme 23, Public information.

2. It is our understanding that you will submit comments from Fourth Committee delegations on programmes 2, 3 and 23 only, as requested by Fifth Committee Chairman Sengwe. We disagree with the statement made by the representative of Cuba on 9 October that sections of programme 1 should have been included in the Chairman's letter.

3. In accordance with the decision of the General Assembly on 20 September, the United States maintains the view that consideration of agenda item 114, Programme planning, should take place in the Fifth Committee.

(Signed) Cameron R. HUME
Alternate United States Representative
to the Fourth Committee

Enclosure

Programme 2. Peacekeeping operations, of the medium-term plan for the period 1998-2001

1. While the United States finds the medium-term plan to be a generally good blueprint for the Department of Peacekeeping Operations to follow for the period 1998-2001, we offer the following suggestions for improvement in the programme:

2. Inherent to an overall objective of maintaining and enhancing a flexible capacity to undertake peacekeeping operations is the requirement to build the capacity to mount such operations quickly and efficiently. While certain aspects of building that capacity are included in the subprogrammes, we should make explicit in paragraph 2.6 that the overall programme must include the development of a capacity to respond quickly to crises.

3. Critical to this capacity is the establishment of a rapidly deployable headquarters team as the Department of Peacekeeping Operations is currently doing with the assistance of Canada, the Netherlands and other interested States. The medium-term plan should include this as a priority and fix responsibility for this initiative in one of the subprogrammes. Also, while subprogramme 2.4, Planning, is tasked with the further development of a capacity for quick response through such initiatives as the standby arrangements system, the development of a standby database of personnel, a central United Nations medical depot and database, and predeployment training programmes, other crucial tasks for rapid response are not emphasized in other subprogrammes.

4. In particular, subprogramme 2.3, Field administration and logistics support, should be more specific on those initiatives designed to provide quick, responsive logistical support for start-up missions, such as through standing pre-contract arrangements with commercial providers, standing transportation contracts and pre-positioning of mission start-up kits at the United Nations Logistics Base at Brindisi.

5. In a related manner, neither the overall programme nor subprogramme 2.3 fixes responsibility for the implementation of the recommendations of the High-

level Expert Group on Procurement Reform. Doing so would serve to place emphasis on an extremely important reform initiative, which should be accomplished as soon as possible.

6. Also, we advocate the pre-negotiation of open, mission-wide logistics contracts for use in new missions. These commercial contracts, known as "service" contracts, allow one company to provide a mission with most or all logistic support.

7. Similar to a rapid response capacity, the requirement to coordinate a response to complex emergencies with other departments of the Secretariat and other specialized United Nations agencies is a function that cuts across the Department of Peacekeeping Operations. As such, that requirement should be recognized as a key component of the overall objective of the medium-term programme in paragraph 2.6 and not just relegated to subprogramme 2.2, Operations.

8. We noted that the programme includes "the formulation of resource requirements for submission to the Controller". However, with the possible exception of subprogramme 2.3, Field administration and logistics support, which will focus greater efforts in planning, analysis and evaluation of mission financial management, the programme fails to consider needed reform actions in financing. In this regard, analysis and evaluation of mission financial management must be complemented by a feedback process that ensures immediate corrective action as appropriate. The programme should also address reform of the current system of budgeting and financing peacekeeping operations through the creation of a unified peace operations budget, additional flexibility for missions to commit funds, and increases in the peacekeeping reserve fund.

9. We are pleased that the medium-term programme contains initiatives dealing with lessons-learned in all of the subprogrammes. However, we believe that one office should be given the lead to coordinate all such initiatives across the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and ensure that lessons-learned are not only compiled, but are also applied to contingency planning and new mission start-ups through a feedback process.

10. We are pleased to note the creation of an integrated communications and information management system in subprogramme 2.1, Executive direction and policy. The United States supported this initiative with a study by the Defense Information Systems Agency, which provided detailed recommendations for such a system. We would urge other nations similarly to support this endeavour.

Programme 3. Outer space affairs, of the medium-term plan for the period 1998-2001

11. During the thirty-sixth session of the Committee for Programme and Coordination, the United States raised concerns over the potentially ambitious plans for a third United Nations Conference on the Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space, often referred to as UNISPACE III. In paragraph 3.4 (f), the Office for Outer Space Affairs signals its readiness to provide support for the preparation of such a conference. The United States is not convinced that a

third UNISPACE-style conference is necessary or appropriate given existing cooperation and the several financial constraints facing the United Nations and the Member States. We stated during the Committee for Programme and Coordination meeting that all possibilities and alternatives for achieving the proposed objectives of such a conference should be considered.

Programme 23. Public information of the medium-term plan for the period 1998-2001

12. In paragraph 23.1, CD-ROMs and United Nations depositary libraries should be added to the list of channels of modern communication.

13. In paragraph 23.3, on the Dag Hammarskjöld Library, mention should be made of how the Department of Public Information will implement the findings of the library consultant who will be hired as a result of the Committee on Information's draft resolution that will likely be passed this fall. This is a key segment of the resolution and of vital interest to all Member States.

14. In paragraph 23.4, the activities should include a review of all activities in the light of the budget cap - similar to this biennium's $2,608 billion - that will be set for the 1998-2001 period. For example, given the limited resources that will be available, the programme should identify what services are best suited for the technology available in the developed versus the developing world. Resources should be matched to each region's ability to utilize the different services of the Department of Public Information.

15. Also in this paragraph, as well as in paragraph 23.13, it should be a priority to increase the ability of the Office of the Spokesman to respond to press inquiries quickly and accurately. The report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services on the Department of Public Information (E/AC.51/1996/2, annex) has cited how out-of-touch this office is in dealing with press needs.

16. In paragraph 23.15, mention should be made of a cost study of a broadcasting system before any decisions are made. Many members raised this issue in the programme review by the Committee for Programme and Coordination.

17. As an addition to paragraph 23.9, mention should be made of implementation of the findings of the review of the Department of Public Information of United Nations information centre operations, as called for in the Committee on Information's draft resolution in May. Given that this is the largest single expenditure in the Department of Public Information, United Nations information centres should operate at the highest levels of efficiency, especially taking into account the different information environments in the developing versus the developed world.

18. Finally, there is no mention of the organization's current fiscal restraints. We do not expect these problems to disappear by 1998. Therefore the report should contain reference to the need to balance the various functions of the Department of Public Information to ensure the maximum utilization of resources. One of the first places to start would be to explain priorities on the list of all mandates under which the Department of Public Information

operates so that the Department could work with the Committee on Information to ensure that limited resources will be well spent.

[Original: English]

E. LETTER DATED 15 OCTOBER 1996 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF PAPUA NEW GUINEA, ON BEHALF OF THE MEMBERS OF THE SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON THE SITUATION WITH REGARD TO THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECLARATION ON THE GRANTING OF INDEPENDENCE TO COLONIAL COUNTRIES AND PEOPLES ADDRESSED TO THE CHAIRMAN OF THE FOURTH COMMITTEE

1. I wish to convey to you that at its informal meeting held yesterday, 14 October 1996, the members of the Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples resolved to propose to you a new additional subprogramme to be added as 1.8 in programme 1 of the medium-term plan for the period 1998-2001 as contained in document A/51/6.

2. As you would note that in the current programme 1 of the medium-term plan, most of the work of the United Nations pertaining to decolonization has been eliminated.

3. What we propose here contains the aspects of the programme that is most relevant to the work of the Special Committee and the United Nations as a whole in assisting the peoples of the Non-Self-Governing Territories in their progress towards self-determination within the framework of the Charter of the United Nations as well as its relevant resolutions and in particular within the meaning of the United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism by the Year 2000.

4. We kindly urge you to call for the inclusion of what we propose as a new subprogramme 1.8 in programme 1 of the medium-term plan for the period 1998-2001 so that it is reflected in the United Nations budget appropriations.

5. It is extremely important that you present this case on behalf of the members of the Special Committee when you make your statement as Chairman of the Fourth Committee to the Fifth Committee.

6. The proposed new additional subprogramme 1.8 is enclosed for your information and appropriate action.

(Signed) Utula U. SAMANA, CMG
Ambassador/Permanent Representative

Enclosure

Proposed new subprogramme 1.8 of programme 1 of the medium-term plan for the period 1998-2001, as contained in document A/51/6

Subprogramme 1.8 Decolonization

The objectives of the subprogramme are:

(a) Promoting the decolonization process in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations and relevant resolutions of the General Assembly for the 17 remaining Non-Self-Governing Territories;

(b) Strengthening the dissemination of information on decolonization in order to mobilize world opinion and ensuring the provision by the specialized agencies and institutions associated with the United Nations of assistance to the peoples of the Non-Self-Governing Territories.

The Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples will continue to examine the application of the Declaration and to seek suitable means for its immediate and full implementation in all Territories that have not yet exercised their rights in accordance with the Charter and relevant resolutions of the General Assembly. It will formulate specific proposals to this effect, examine the full compliance of States with the Declaration and other resolutions, formulate specific proposals for the elimination of the remaining manifestations of colonialism and report thereon to the General Assembly, and enlist worldwide support for decolonization. The Special Committee will continue to dispatch visiting missions periodically to colonial Territories, so as to enable the Special Committee to obtain first-hand information on conditions in those Territories; examine the views, expressed orally or in writing by peoples of the Non-Self-Governing Territories, and also the views of the representatives of non-governmental organizations and individuals with a knowledge of conditions in those Territories; and assist the General Assembly in making arrangements, in cooperation with the administering Powers, to secure a United Nations presence in the Non-Self-Governing Territories to observe or supervise the final stages of the process of decolonization.

Course of action of the Secretariat

The Department of Political Affairs will continue to assist the Special Committee in the implementation of its mandate, as well as the General Assembly, in connection with issues under this subprogramme, as appropriate.

To that end, the Department will:

(a) Provide substantive servicing to the Special Committee and its visiting and other missions, as well as to the General Assembly when they are reviewing issues relating to decolonization;

(b) Undertake research, analytical studies and reports on conditions in the Territories;

(c) Provide assistance to the Special Committee in the preparation of its reports to the General Assembly;

(d) Collect, review and disseminate basic material, studies and articles relating to decolonization;

(e) Promote in cooperation with the Department of Public Information a publicity campaign on decolonization. Subject to the relevant decisions by the Special Committee, this will entail organizing panel discussions and seminars, producing and disseminating publications, organizing exhibits, coordinating international activities aimed at the elimination of colonialism, including liaison with international organizations and individuals concerned with the problems of decolonization;

(f) Promote flows of assistance from specialized agencies and institutions associated with the United Nations to the people in the Non-Self-Governing Territories.